# MAT governance self-evaluation questions

## RAG rating guidance

This guidance is designed to help trust boards and academy committees respond to NGA’s self-evaluation questions.

* We recommend that boards use a red, amber or green (RAG) rating system to respond to the questions.
* Each trustee and academy committee member should provide individual responses to the questions.
* Select the most appropriate RAG rating using the descriptors given below.

## 21 questions for trust boards

### Board culture and practice

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| Self-evaluation questions | Descriptors *Tick the red, amber or green descriptor that best fits your board.* | ✔ |
| Governance culture The governing board is a committed team that works well with the trust’s executive leader and the governance professional. | Our board is a team which collaborates with executive leaders and the governance professional; we have the time required to carry out the role, our meetings are well attended, we undertake training and development and visit schools in our trust. | GREEN |
| Our board is developing as a team and mostly manages to give the time required to carry out the role with most meetings being quorate; some of us undertake training and development and visit schools in our trust. | AMBER |
| Our board is not yet a team and can struggle to find the time to carry out the role with some meetings not being quorate; few of us manage to undertake training and development or visit schools in our trust. | RED |
| Board leadership The chair is appointed annually, leads with integrity, is supported by a vice chair and ensures the board stays strategic and does not shy away from making the right decisions for the trust. | Our chair and vice chair are appointed annually following a proper process which allows the board to consider if the nominee(s) have the right qualities to lead our board. | GREEN |
| Our chair and vice chair are appointed annually but there are not usually other candidates. | AMBER |
| We are grateful for anyone willing to take on the roles. | RED |
| Governance professional The trust employs a dedicated governance professional who coordinates the delivery of governance support across the trust, ensuring independent clerking of board committees and academy committees. | Our governance professional is qualified, up to date with current legislation and practice, administers and advises governance across the trust with skill ensuring good communication pathways between the governance tiers – we couldn’t do without this. | GREEN |
| Our governance professional’s focus is supporting the trust board, but the remit does not include development of governance across the trust or ensuring good communication between the governance tiers. | AMBER |
| Our governance professional has other roles within the trust and would benefit from training and development. | RED |
| Skills and diversity Succession is planned, the recruitment process is designed to ensure trustees are recruited to fill skills gaps and ensure diversity of knowledge, experience, perspectives and approaches. | We undertake a skills audit regularly and use the outcome to inform our succession planning, recruitment strategy and training and development; recently we have focused on diversifying our board. | GREEN |
| We undertake a skills audit when we need to recruit but have yet to use it to inform succession planning, training and development; we struggle to find people to commit to the role but are thinking more about diversity. | AMBER |
| We have not carried out a skills audit recently; our board is long-standing and stable and appointing more diverse people is not a priority. | RED |
| Induction and ongoing development There is a quality induction programme in place for new trustees and a culture of ongoing governance training and development. | All new board members get a comprehensive induction and can access quality training and development for areas where the board needs to learn and develop. | GREEN |
| New board members are given information and meet the chair and CEO; board members generally identify where they need training and development. | AMBER |
| New board members learn on the job; our board knows what it is doing and doesn’t need training and development. | RED |

### Board structure

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| Separation Each layer of governance is separate with no overlaps, conflicts or opportunities for undue influence. | None of our members are trustees, and neither members nor trustees sit on academy committees. | GREEN |
| The majority of our members are not trustees, and in general trustees do not sit on academy committees. | AMBER |
| We have some dual roles; this works for our trust. | RED |
| Size The trust board is the right size with a proportionate committee structure. | We have the right number of people around the table for the board to undertake its strategic functions and to enable delegation to the committees we need. | GREEN |
| We have not yet got the right number of people around the table: there are not enough people to delegate responsibilities effectively OR there are too many people and so some are not making a meaningful contribution. | AMBER |
| We have not yet made time to review the size of our board and evaluate our committee structure. | RED |
| Delegation The scheme of delegation and committee terms of reference are clear and fully aligned with the responsibilities allocated to each tier of governance. | We review and revise our scheme of delegation and board and academy committee terms of reference annually to ensure that we are working as efficiently as we can. | GREEN |
| There is some duplication of our work and we have yet to ensure our scheme of delegation and terms of reference are constructed in a way that means this does not happen. | AMBER |
| We have not reviewed our scheme of delegation and terms of reference properly for some time and they do not reflect the work we undertake at committee level. | RED |
| Local governance Guidance, support and communication with academy committees is effective, enabling academy committees to play a meaningful role in the governance of the trust. | We are committed to local governance and are prepared to give the time necessary to engage with the local tier and ensure the governance professional has the time and skill to support governance across the trust. | GREEN |
| We have local governance but have yet to work out how best to make the local tier a meaningful part of our governance structure. | AMBER |
| We only have local governance because Ofsted expect it. | RED |

### Core functions

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| Values, ethics and culture Trustees and executive leaders have agreed the trust’s values which are evident in policies and practice, ensure ethical behaviours and underpin a healthy culture across the trust. | We have worked with the CEO to review our values and regularly test that they drive ethical behaviour and a healthy culture. | GREEN |
| Our values are long-established and we believe that they drive ethical behaviour and a healthy culture. | AMBER |
| Our CEO sets the values and we trust that they drive ethical behaviour and a healthy culture. | RED |
| Vision Trustees and executive leaders have established a clear and ambitious vision which describes what the trust should look like in three to five years and what pupils will achieve. | Our board has worked with the CEO and has consulted with stakeholders in establishing our ambitious vision for the next three to five years. | GREEN |
| Our CEO has a clear vision, and we agree with it. | AMBER |
| Our board has yet to look forward three to five years and think about what we would like our trust to look like then. | RED |
| Strategy Trustees have agreed with the executive leader a limited number of measurable strategic aims which need to be met in order for the trust to achieve its vision; these aims drive the board’s business. | Our board has agreed a limited number of measurable strategic aims and progress with meeting these is reported to our board meetings. | GREEN |
| Our aims are known but progress reporting on these is not systematic; it is not straightforward for the board to track progress being made. | AMBER |
| Our board focuses on the annual trust improvement plan; there is too much uncertainty to look further ahead than this. | RED |
| The board as employer The board acknowledges its responsibilities as employer of trust staff and ensures the development and wellbeing of the executive leader. | Staff wellbeing and development is a priority for our board; we ensure trust wide staff surveys take place regularly and are reported and use other data to monitor the effectiveness of our policies. | GREEN |
| We are introducing trust wide staff surveys and other mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of our policies. | AMBER |
| Our board relies on the CEO to keep us informed about staff wellbeing and development; we trust them to inform us of any issues. | RED |
| Accountability – quality of education Trustees hold the executive leader to account for the quality of education that pupils receive, ensuring school leaders develop, implement and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. | We have had training on curriculum matters and have a good understanding of the principles that underpin a good curriculum, and how our trust measures its implementation and impact. | GREEN |
| Our board is beginning to understand the principles that underpin a good curriculum but is yet to fully understand how implementation and impact is measured. | AMBER |
| Our board is yet to build an understanding of the principles that underpin a good curriculum, and how its implementation and impact is measured. | RED |
| Accountability – financial oversight Trustees understand how the trust’s funds are managed and hold the executive leader to account for the efficiency, sustainability and impact of the trust’s financial planning and management. | Our board has a good understanding of how schools are funded and how our trust manages funding; several of our board members have detailed knowledge of planning and monitoring of consolidated budgets. | GREEN |
| Our board has just enough people with an understanding of school funding, budget planning and monitoring. | AMBER |
| Our board focuses on pupil outcomes and believes that financial sustainability should be of secondary concern. | RED |
| Accountability – stakeholders Trustees know their schools and their stakeholders and take into account their views when making key decisions, reporting annually on the work of the trust board. | Our board knows their schools, their communities and stakeholders and takes into account their views when making key decisions; we report on this aspect of our work each year. | GREEN |
| Some of trustees know the schools and like going to events but knowledge of their communities and stakeholders is limited. | AMBER |
| Our board finds it hard to find time to get to know their schools, communities and stakeholders; we rely on the CEO to keep us informed. | RED |

### Compliance

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| Statutory requirements Trustees are confident that the trust meets all legal requirements and takes into account statutory guidance, including on conflicts of interest and related party transactions. | We are aware of our statutory responsibilities, take into account statutory guidance and are compliant with policies and procedures. | GREEN |
| We think we meet most statutory requirements, aim to take into account statutory guidance and think we comply with policies and procedures. | AMBER |
| There are so many requirements that it is hard to know if we are compliant or not. | RED |
| Managing risk Trustees are involved in the identification and assessment of key strategic risks. | We identify and review annually risks which may prevent us from achieving our strategic aims or of non-compliance. | GREEN |
| We are in the process of understanding our role in managing risk. | AMBER |
| We are too busy to undertake any additional tasks. | RED |

### Evaluation and impact

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| Evaluation of trustee contribution A 360° appraisal process is used to evaluate the chair’s effectiveness, and the chair or vice chair reviews trustees’ individual contributions and effectiveness each year. | The chair undertakes a 360° appraisal, and the vice chair speaks to all board members individually about how they have contributed to the work of the board each year. | GREEN |
| The chair is going to undertake a 360° appraisal this year and it has been agreed that they will speak to all board members individually about how they have contributed to the work of the board. | AMBER |
| Our chair and vice chair don’t perceive a need to undertake appraisal or are too busy. | RED |
| Evaluation of board practice The board undertakes annual self-evaluation and commissions an external evaluation every three years; these are reported to the trust’s members. | We self-evaluate annually and commission an external review every three years. | GREEN |
| We self-evaluate most years and have discussed commissioning an external review of governance. | AMBER |
| This is the first time we have self-evaluated, and we have not yet commissioned an external review of governance. | RED |
| Evaluation of impact Trustees are confident that the decisions the board makes have led to both improved outcomes for pupils and ongoing financial stability for the trust. | Our pupils’ outcomes continue to improve and meet the highest expectations and our trust’s budget is balanced with a reasonable contingency. | GREEN |
| Our pupils’ outcomes are generally improving, and our trust’s budget is tight with minimal contingency. | AMBER |
| Our pupils’ outcomes are not improving as much as we would like, and our school’s current budget position needs to be more secure. | RED |

## 16 questions for academy committees

### Academy committee structure and practice

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| Self-evaluation questions | Descriptors *Tick the red, amber or green descriptor that best fits your board.* | ✔ |
| Governance culture The academy committee is a committed team, is well led and acts professionally. | Our committee is a team which collaborates with senior leaders and the governance professional; we have the time required to carry out the role, our meetings are well attended, we undertake training and development and visit our school. | GREEN |
| Our committee is developing as a team and mostly manages to give the time required to carry out the role with most meetings being quorate; some of us undertake training and development and are able to visit the school. | AMBER |
| Our committee is not yet a team and can struggle to find the time to carry out the role with some meetings not being quorate; a few of us manage to undertake training and development and visit our school. | RED |
| People There is a role description for academy committee members which is used to recruit new and diverse committee members with the right skills and who reflect our local community. | Our role description is clear and well understood and helps us recruit the right people from our community for our committee. | GREEN |
| There is a role description, but it is not referred to or used. | AMBER |
| We do not have a role description. | RED |
| Size The academy committee is the right size for carrying out its role. | Our terms of reference define the right number of people for our committee to undertake the functions delegated to it. | GREEN |
| Our terms of reference define the size of our committee, but we have concerns that it is not the right number for us to undertake our delegated functions. | AMBER |
| We do not have clear terms of reference and so do what we think is right for the school. | RED |
| Governance professional The trust employs a dedicated governance professional who provides advice and guidance to our academy committee. | Our trust’s governance professional is qualified, is up to date with our trust’s governance structure and practice, is readily available to provide advice and guidance and ensures our committee is supported by a skilled independent clerk. | GREEN |
| Our trust’s governance professional works primarily with the trust board and can be contacted; we make our own clerking arrangements. | AMBER |
| Our trust does not have a governance professional. | RED |
| Guidance documents There is a range of trust-specific documents – including a scheme of delegation – that explains our role and helps us to fulfil it. | Our committee benefits from a clear and concise scheme of delegation and other guidance documents which are reviewed regularly after consultation with us – we would not be so confident that we are fulfilling our role without these. | GREEN |
| Our scheme of delegation is generally understood but we would benefit from more guidance documents and training on how to undertake our role. | AMBER |
| Our scheme of delegation is difficult to interpret; we do not have a clear understanding of our role. | RED |
| Induction and ongoing development There is quality induction for new academy committee members and a culture of ongoing governance training and development. | All new committee members get a comprehensive induction, and the trust ensures that we can all access quality training and development. | GREEN |
| New committee members are given information and meet the chair and headteacher; the trust leaves us to source ongoing training and development. | AMBER |
| New committee members learn on the job; at this level ongoing training and development is not required. | RED |
| Communication Our academy committee is able to communicate effectively with the trust board and the trust’s executive leader. | Our committee chair meets with the trust board chair termly, and everyone involved with the governance of the trust and its schools attends an annual conference. | GREEN |
| Our CEO attends one of our committee meetings each year and reports back to trustees. | AMBER |
| We have no direct access to trustees; all communication is through the governance professional or the CEO. | RED |

### Core functions

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| Values, ethics and culture Our academy committee understands and embraces our trust’s values, ethics and culture. | Our trust has a strong set of values which we embrace as they define and drive a healthy culture; these do not preclude our school retaining its own identity. | GREEN |
| Our trust has a set of values which we recognise but we have our own school values which we feel are better placed to drive a healthy culture. | AMBER |
| We do not recognise our trust’s values. | RED |
| Vision and strategy Our academy committee understands the part we play in our trust’s vision and strategy for the future and how that shapes our school. | Our trust has a clear vision and we are pleased to play our part in the strategy for meeting it. | GREEN |
| There is a broad trust vision which our school is supposed to take into account when setting our vision and strategy. | AMBER |
| Our trust expects us to set our own vision and strategy. | RED |
| Support and challenge Our academy committee has a meaningful role in supporting and challenging the headteacher in order to ensure pupils receive a high quality education. | We are clear about the extent of our support and challenge role both within the school and the trust and we are involved in the headteacher’s performance review. | GREEN |
| We are generally clear about the extent of our role but it is more about supporting than challenging and only within the school and not within the trust. | AMBER |
| We do not understand our support and challenge role and we are unsure how to get it clarified. | RED |
| Engaging with stakeholders Our academy committee knows its school and community, engages with stakeholders and shares their views with the trust. | We know our school well, actively engage with stakeholders and ensure their views are shared with the trust. | GREEN |
| Some of us know the school and like going to events but systematic engagement with stakeholders is largely via the school’s leaders. | AMBER |
| We find it hard to find time to get to know the school well and rely on the headteacher to report what stakeholders think. | RED |

### Compliance

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| With policies Our academy committee is clear which policies it is monitoring and how to report any concerns to the trust. | We have an up to date policy schedule which makes clear our role in policy setting and monitoring. | GREEN |
| Our trust deals with policies and leaves it to us to decide which polices we monitor. | AMBER |
| We do not have a role with policies. | RED |
| Safeguarding Our academy committee has a good understanding of its role and responsibilities in ensuring pupils are kept safe and know how to report concerns. | We all understand our responsibility for ensuring our pupils are kept safe, are trained annually in safeguarding, have a named safeguarding committee member who reports termly on meetings with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the trust’s safeguarding lead who provides assurance on compliance with the single central record (SCR). | GREEN |
| We are aware of the importance of safeguarding and have a named safeguarding committee member who meets with the DSL; new members are trained and the headteacher provides assurance on compliance with the SCR. | AMBER |
| We get reports from the headteacher at our termly meeting. | RED |
| Risk Our academy committee understands how our trust manages risk. | We understand how our trust manages risk and how our school’s risk register feeds into the trust’s risk register. | GREEN |
| We assume that our trust manages risk and at school level we are aware of operational risks. | AMBER |
| Risk is managed at trust level. | RED |

### Evaluation and impact

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| Self-evaluation The trust ensures we all participate in evaluating our own effectiveness, each year action is taken as a result. | Our trust organises self-evaluation for us each year, report back the findings to us and consult with us on proposed changes that result from this process. |  |
| We are encouraged to self-evaluate but it is left to us to choose the best way to do this. |  |
| We do not see the value of or have time to self-evaluate. |  |
| Evaluation of impact Our academy committee’s role in governance is valued by both the trust and the school and has a positive impact on pupil outcomes. | Our support, challenge and monitoring role is taken seriously by the school and the trust and so we know our contributions are impacting on improved pupil outcomes. |  |
| We do our best to contribute, but sometimes it can feel like our role is bypassed by the executive and trustees. |  |
| Our role is not meaningful enough to make us feel like we are able to make a difference. |  |